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Senate passes cervical cancer vaccine legislation

Michigan is first in the nation to include vaccination on school schedule

Lansing --- All girls entering the sixth grade would be required to receive a vaccination which would prevent the virus that causes cervical cancer under legislation the state Senate approved overwhelmingly today, announced Michigan State Senator Beverly Hammerstrom, R-Temperance. The vaccine is required unless parents choose to opt-out as provided under Michigan law.

“I want to thank my colleagues for joining me in supporting this legislation. Today, Michigan took a giant step forward in protecting our daughters and granddaughters from the cervical cancer,” said Sen. Hammerstrom, who chairs the Senate Health Policy Committee.

Senate Bills 1416 and 1417 require a vaccine for the human papillomavirus (HPV) to be added to the immunization schedule for Michigan’s schools and academies.

Sen. Hammerstrom’s efforts come after the recent FDA approval of an HPV vaccine for girls and women aged 9 through 26. The federal Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommended routine vaccination in girls aged 11 and 12 and, as appropriate, for the other approved age groups.

The vaccine has been shown in clinical trials to be 100 percent effective at preventing disease from the two types of HPV that are responsible for approximately 70 percent of all cervical cancers. After breast cancer, cervical cancer is the second most diagnosed cancer among women.

Sen. Hammerstrom noted that as with all other school-required vaccines, parents may opt-out of this requirement for medical, religious or philosophical reasons.

“As with all vaccines required for school-entry, parents do have the option to decide whether or not they would like their daughter to receive the HPV vaccine,” said Sen. Hammerstrom.

The legislation has received bipartisan support, including from all of the women in the Michigan Senate.

(More)

“This legislation is about saving lives and preventing cancer,” said Sen. Hammerstrom. “For the first time in history, we have an opportunity to prevent a disease that kills 4,000 women nationwide each year.”

In addition to the HPV vaccine, regular screening is essential in helping to prevent cervical cancer, including those cases caused by HPV strains not covered by the vaccine. Early detection and treatment are vital steps in stopping cervical cancer.

“Although this vaccine safeguards women from the two strains of HPV that causes 70 percent of cervical cancer cases, it is but one step in our fight against this disease,” Sen. Hammerstrom said. “Because the vaccine does not protect against strains of the virus that cause the other 30 percent of cases, women still need to educate themselves on the steps they can take to prevent cervical cancer. Even women who receive the vaccine should still continue to receive regular screenings until such time as medical advances are available to attack those strains.”

Sen. Hammerstrom’s efforts stem from her participation in Women In Government’s “Challenge to Eliminate Cervical Cancer Campaign,” which mobilizes state legislators to target cervical cancer eradication through education and policy. Since 2004, 45 states have introduced legislation or resolutions tackling this issue. Michigan, however, is the first state to require the vaccine for school entry.

Sen. Hammerstrom, who has served as chair of the Board of Directors for WIG, was one of the first legislators to join the campaign.

SBs 1416 and 1417 now move to the House of Representatives for consideration.

About Cervical Cancer

Worldwide, cervical cancer is the second leading cancer-killer of women, with almost a quarter-million deaths each year. In the United States, the American Cancer Society estimates 9,710 women will be diagnosed with and more than 3,700 women will die of cervical cancer in 2006. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 20 million people are currently infected with HPV, with 6.2 million new infections occurring annually and approximately 80 percent of sexually active women will be infected with HPV by age 50. For 90 percent of infected women, the virus is naturally cleared by the body and becomes undetectable within two years. Persistent infection with “high-risk” types of HPV can cause cell changes that, untreated, can lead to cervical cancer.

About Women In Government

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